Gators: An Endangered Species?

CSC 1995

SUBJECT AREA - Warfighting

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Title: 'Gators: An Endangered Species?

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Thesis: Does the United States Navy currently have enough amphibious shipping to meet the requirements of our National Military Strategy? Will future construction and replacement programs be adequate with the expanding amphibious missions?

Background: The Navy currently has 39 amphibious ships in the fleet with only 7 new ships scheduled for commissioning by the year 2000. By 2010, the number will drop to approximately 32. The result of these actions is an amphibious fleet that is rapidly reaching the end of its effective service life. We can currently meet the 2.5 MEB assault echelon requirements however; when forward presence, assault follow-on echelon requirements, crisis response (Haiti, Somalia), and peacekeeping operations are factored in, meeting the requirements will become increasingly difficult.

Recommendation: We need to remove the two year procurement delay on the LPD-17 program and initiate a well-structured construction program that will deliver 12 new LPD-17's by 2010. Additionally, we should preserve the current construction plans for the LHD's and LSD-41 class.

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V. Conclusions and Recommendations

In 1945 the United States Navy possessed 1,728 amphibious ships, which constituted 40 percent of the fleet and enabled the US to project 13 combat divisions. By 1979 this capability had diminished to its lowest level since the pre-Korean War period. Comprising only 14 percent of the fleet, the 65 amphibious ships in active service could lift the assault echelons (AE) of only 1.15 Marine Expeditionary Forces (MEF), approximately 37,000 marines.1 Today, 39 amphibious ships remain in the fleet with only seven new ships scheduled for commissioning by the year 2000. By 2010, the number will drop to approximately 32. The result of these actions is an amphibious fleet that is rapidly reaching the end of its effective service life.

Amphibious lift is the critical factor in expeditionary warfare to support national security objectives. Forward presence and crisis response are two of the pillars on which national security strategy is built. The Navy/Marine team has based lift on USMC warfighting requirements that translate to having the capability to lift 2.5 MEB. This 2.5 MEB lift does not factor forward presence into the equation. The Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) has dictated a 12 ARG requirement to support Marine Corps warfighting requirements and forward presence. This translates into a 3.0 MEB lift equivalent. The Navy has rightly brought forth the point that it would be difficult to meet the 3.0 MEB requirement within present financial constraints. The solution in meeting the 12 ARG requirement was using large deck amphibious ships (LHA and LHD) currently in the fleet or under construction.

While our current war plans require amphibious lift for the assault echelons of two

marine expeditionary forces, funding can only support a 2.5 Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB) assault echelon, the nation's minimum requirement. This 2.5 MEB lift would meet current requirements for forward deployed naval forces and still provide adequate surge capability to lift the assault echelons of a MEB in the Atlantic and Pacific theaters.2

The amphibious mission is key to our national defense, and surface forces are essential to fulfill this mission. As General Alfred M. Gray put it in April 1988 testimony before the Senate Armed Services Committee, "Amphibious shipping is this country's only means of sustainable power projection. Amphibious ships provide us the capability of forcible entry."3

The noted British historian B.H. Liddell Hart eloquently stated why an amphibious capability for forcible entry is important to national security: "The history of warfare shows that the basic strategic asset of sea-based peoples is amphibious flexibility. In tackling land-based opponents, they can produce a distraction to the enemy power of concentration that is advantageously disproportionate to the scale of force they employ and the resources they possess."4

In 1992, the Navy's white paper "From the Sea" announced a shift in strategic focus away from the blue-water warfare "on the sea" to a primary warfighting emphasis in brown-water, or littoral warfare, conducted "from the sea". This focus on brown-water warfare presents a radical departure from previous maritime doctrine and aligns maritime strategy with current national security priorities.

The recently published "Forward ... From the Sea" states that "It is the world's littorals where the Naval service, operating from sea bases in international waters, can influence

events ashore in support of our interests. Forward deployed naval forces will provide the critical operational linkages between peacetime operations and the initial requirements of a developing crisis or major regional contingency." It fiber states that 50 percent of our basic presence building blocks will be the Amphibious Ready Groups with special operations capable marine expeditionary units.5 Additionally, two of the five fundamental and enduring roles in support of national security strategy involve amphibious shipping, projection of power from sea to shore, and forward naval presence.

Forward presence is the mainstay of America's diplomacy. It lends credibility to our formed alliances and contributes to conflict resolution and prevention. As the global security environment changes, additional changes in forward stationed forces may be appropriate. However, if forward stationing decreases, forward presence operations will increase in importance.6

History suggests the futility of attempting to predict exactly when, where and how any potential foreign threat will challenge our national interests. History also compels us to assume that some threat will eventually arise and most probably on short notice.

For the Navy, this new security environment has meant that its blue-water maritime strategy is no longer applicable to its likely future missions. Most of the areas of instability and social strife today are in major third world cities and urban areas most easily accessed by seaward approaches. In fact, 60 percent of the politically significant urban areas around the world are located within 25 miles of the coastline; 75 percent are located within 150 miles.7

The Navy and Marine Corps team is increasingly called upon to carry out operations other than war such as crisis response, humanitarian relief, forward presence, maritime

sanctions and embargo enforcement, migrant interdiction, drug operations, peace enforcing, peacekeeping, and non-combat evacuation of allied and US citizens. Operations Earnest Will (Persian Gulf), Eastern Exit (Somalia), Sea-Angel (Indian Ocean), Provide Comfort and Promise (Middle East), and Support Democracy (Caribbean) are just a few recent examples that confirm this intensified operational trend.

Although the US has forces stationed in peacetime in many areas of the world, there are significantly more places where it does not. The advantages in the use of sea-based amphibious forces compared to shore-based forces include independence from basing agreements and host nation support and overflight rights, the ability to loiter off the coast almost indefinitely, an inherent logistics support capability, and the ability to reposition quickly without media knowledge or coverage.

The key to littoral warfare will be to obtain and maintain battlespace dominance near the coastline and 150 miles inland so that expeditionary forces can be introduced rapidly and decisively.8

Ultimately, global and regional situations will continue to arise which call on naval forces as a key element in joint and combined efforts during crisis. We are a maritime nation, and our national strategy recognizes the necessity for us to control vital sea lanes of communication through naval superiority.

Amphibious forces contribute to the mission of maintaining a peacetime presence. They are used as a show of force to provide diplomatic leverage and to display US intentions or interests. The presence of naval forces globally is a continuous reminder of the certain costs of aggression to potential adversaries. Additionally, naval forces provide our leadership with numerous capabilities to deal with unexpected contingencies. In the years

since World War II the United States has employed military force as a political instrument some 200 times. Of these, four out of five involved naval forces, and the majority of naval efforts included marines embarked on amphibious ships.9

Amphibious forces provide presence and crisis response in support of our national security strategy. The visible presence of military forces in regions vital to national interest is key to averting crisis, preventing conflict and demonstrating America's interest in global affairs. Amphibious forces, because they are forward positioned and expeditionary in nature, have frequently been the first called to respond to a national security crisis. Therefore, the United States must maintain amphibious forces of sufficient size and capability to meet the nation's forward presence and crisis response needs. Amphibious ships perform a variety of missions from forward presence in peacetime, to crisis response in hot spots near the coastline, to introduction of expeditionary forces for sustained operations ashore. Within the new strategic requirements Amphibious forces may also conduct such missions as humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, counter-terrorism, and political stability operations such as peacekeeping, civic action and nation building.

II. Present Amphibious Capabilities and Requirements

The unique capabilities of the naval amphibious forces make them ideal for providing the initial "enabling forces" very often required in most regional crisis. An enabling force supplies the means and opportunity to insert Marine forces into a crisis to initially stabilize the situation that allows follow-on joint forces ample time to mobilize, employ, and intervene. Quick response of a credible armed force in a given crisis can make the difference in stabilizing the situation.10 Additionally, this armed force must be fully

capable of operating in a joint environment for ease of integration into the unified commanders joint force if the crisis proves to be of such magnitude as to require a much larger force. Focusing on the littoral area, the Navy and Marine Corps, as the enabling force, can seize and defend an adversary's port, naval base, or coastal air base to allow the entry of heavy Army or Air Forces. An amphibious force located 400 nautical miles from shore is able to launch an amphibious assault against any point along more than 1,000 miles of coastline within 24 hours.

The US Navy interprets the amount of amphibious shipping required to meet the current US Defense policy based on Marine Corps requirements, and studies such as the Department of the Navy Long Term Amphibious Lift Requirement and Optimum Ship Mix Study Validation of 1990. To meet the "Forward... from the Sea" political and military requirements for forward presence and crisis response, the US must maintain enough amphibious lift to transport the assault echelons of at least 2.5 MEB. That requires the transport of approximately 45,000 troops, 1,077 thousand square feet of vehicle stowage, and 2,490 thousand cubic feet of cargo stowage.

The Navy currently attempts to meet this requirement by steaming 38 Amphibious Warfare ships. Many of these ships are approaching the end of their original service life and must be extended on active duty to cover commitments.

There are currently two Amphibious Command and Control ships (LCC) in our inventory. Capable of carrying 700 troops and three to five landing craft personnel (LCP/LCVP), these post second World War design ships provide integrated command and control facilities for sea, air, and land commanders in amphibious operations. Both ships are scheduled for decommissioning in FY 95.11

The Wasp class Amphibious Assault ships (multipurpose) (LHD) were designed to carry the amphibious fleet well into the 21st century. There are currently four ships in service, three under construction and one planned for delivery in 2007. Capable of carrying 2,074 troops, 12 mechanized landing craft (LCM6) or three landing craft air-cushion (LCAC), and four landing craft personnel (LCPL) these workhorses provide significant lift capability to the ARG. The Wasp class contribution to the air picture is formidable. Each LHD has the capacity to carry 6 to 8 AV-8B Harrier fixed-wing aircraft or up to 20 in secondary roles. Rotary wing capability includes 42 CH-46E Sea Knight, but can support AH-1W Super Cobra, CH-53E Super Stallion, CH-53D Sea Stallion, UH-1N Twin Huey, AH-1T Sea Cobra, and SH-60B Seahawk helicopters. A typical compliment of aircraft would include a mix of 30 helicopters and six to eight Harriers. Fitted with a 600 bed hospital and six operating rooms this multipurpose platform provides exceptional mass casualty treatment capability. The LHD's advertised service life is approximately 40 years.12

The Tarawa class Amphibious Assault ships (multipurpose) (LHA) comprise the second class of the "big deck" amphibious ships. There were only five ships of this class built and all are still in service. All five ships will be decommissioned between 2011 and 2015. Capable of carrying 1,703 troops, four utility landing craft (LCU) type 1610 or two LCU and two LCM-8, or 17 LCM-6, or 45 LVT tractors, it also contributes a significant amount of lift. Additionally, it is capable of carrying one LCAC and four LCPL. The LHA's air capabilities include 19 CH-53D Sea Stallion helicopters or 26 CH-46D/E Sea Knight. Harrier AV-8B VSTOL aircraft may be carried in place of some helicopters as required. The LHA flightdeck can operate a maximum of nine CH-53D's or 12

CH-46D/E's or a mix of these and other helicopters. With some additional modifications it can effectively operate at least six AV-8B's. Extensive medical facilities include operating rooms, x-ray room, hospital wards, isolation wards, laboratories, and pharmacies.13

The Iwo Jima class amphibious assault ships (LPH) were designed to carry a Marine battalion landing team, its guns, vehicles, and equipment, plus a reinforced squadron of transport helicopters and various support personnel. Only three of a total of five built remain on active duty with scheduled decommissioning between 2000 and 2003. Specifically, the LPH can carry 1,746 troops, two LCPL's, 20 CH-46D/E Sea Knights or 11 CH-53D Sea Stallions, and four AV-8B Harriers in place of some helicopters. Medical facilities include the same make-up as found on the LHA.14

The Austin class Amphibious Transport Docks (LPD) currently make up the largest ship class of the amphibs with 11 on active duty. Their extended service lives will end between 2000 and 2006. Each ship is capable of carrying 930 troops, nine LCM-6 or four LCM-8, two LCAC or 20 LVT's, and four LCPL/LCVP. Up to six CH-46D/E Sea Knight helicopters can be carried, but only one can be hangered. A typical operational load might include one Seahawk, two Sea Knight, two Twin Huey, and four Sea Cobra. LPD's are capable of landing two AV-8B Harrier aircraft.15

The Whidbey Island class Dock Landing ships (LSD-41) make up the majority of the smaller deck amphibs with eight currently on active duty. Scheduled decommission will occur between 2025 and 2032.

The LSD-41 is capable of carrying 450 troops, four LCAC's, or 21 LCM-6, or three LCU's, or 64 LVT's, and two LCPL's. It has limited air capability, being able to land only

two CH-53 series Stallions.16

The Anchorage class Dock Landing ships (LSD-36) are the oldest of the small deck platforms. All five that were constructed are still on active duty with decommissioning scheduled to begin in 2004 to 2008. They are capable of carrying 366 troops, three LCU's or three LCAC's, or 18 LCM-6, or nine LCM-8, or 50 LVT's, and several LCM/LCPL/LCVP's on deck. It serves as a helicopter platform only.17

There are only four Newport class Tank Landing ships (LST) left in our inventory. Of these, two are scheduled for decommissioning in 1995 and two have been transferred to the Naval Reserve fleet.

When the last LST is retired, the US Amphibious force - for the first time since early in World War II - will not have a ship that can beach itself and offload troops and vehicles through or over the ship's bow.

One of the most serious deficiencies the amphibious force faces today involve the lack of offensive and minimal defensive capabilities as they proceed to the AOA. To conduct enhanced over-the-horizon (OTH) assaults against well-defended objectives, ARGs would need OTH air assault platforms, OTH armored assault craft, advanced early warning aircraft, electronic warfare aircraft with data-link, ASUW/AAW stand-off weapons, and some type of basic ASW weapon.18

III Future Amphibious Capabilities and Requirements

The amphibious force of the 21st century, which will be designed to lift the assault echelons of 2.5 MEBs, will be made up of eight WASP class LHDs, five Tarawa class LHAs, eight Whidbey Island LSD-41s, four Harpers Ferry class LSD-49s, and a yet to be determined number of LPD-17s.

The future amphibious force with the LPD-17 and the seventh LHD will provide a minimum of 12 deployable ARGs with a surge capability to lift 2.5 MEB AEs. The centerpiece of these ARGs are the 12 "big deck" LHAs and LHDs. The LPD-17 design will allow uniform ship pairings and force packaging when forming MAGTFs with an LHA or LHD, LSD-41 or LSD-49.

If the aged amphibs are replaced with new, well-designed ships, fewer ships will be needed to achieve the 12 ARG objective. The LPD-17 class is designed to provide adequate space for equipment, troops, aircraft, and supplies to support the configuration of a three ship ARG. If only 12 LPD-17s and 1 LHD are built to replace the 45 ships reaching block obsolescence an amphibious fleet of 36 ships can be maintained. This would support the 12 ARG objective with a minimum expenditure of funds. Each ARG would consist of a LHD/LHA, LSD, and LPD-17.

There was little real interest in developing a modern workhorse amphibious ship until planners realized that the LPD-17 would be the only amphibious ship built until the Tarawa (LHA-1) class replacements began arriving in the second decade of the 21st century.

The LPD-17 must be delivered just after the turn of the 21st century to contribute its share of the wartime amphibious lift goal as well as support the forward deployed naval presence mission.19

The Harper's Ferry class Dock Landing ships (LSD-49) are under construction at this time with two ships being commissioned in 1995, one in 1996, and one in 1998. These ships are designed to be a cargo carrying variant of the Whidbey Island class and expect to have a useful service life of 40 years. Each ship will be capable of carrying 450 troops,

two LCACs, or nine LCM-6, or one LCU, or 64 LVTs. This cargo carrying variant adds an additional 62,600 cubic feet for marine cargo, and 8,000 cubic feet for vehicle stowage when compared to the LSD-41 class.20

The LPD-17 class amphibious ship is designed to replace 38 ships of the Austin (LPD-4), Raleigh (LPD-1), Anchorage (LSD-36), and Newport (LST-1179) class. The ship will be capable of lifting more than 700 troops with accommodations that will enable a typical 42 man rifle platoon to berth together for unit cohesion. Primary capabilities will include a flight deck capable of supporting helicopters and vertical take off and landing (VTOL) aircraft; a well deck capable of supporting landing craft (wet well) and LCACs (dry well); and vehicle decks, cargo holds, fuel tankage and troop spaces to carry the required lift. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems will be state of the art, an important quality of life feature. Congress has mandated the incorporation of an integrated ship self-defense system to defend against sea-skimming cruise missiles. Weapons may include the Rolling Airframe Missile (RAM), Phalanx close in weapons system and a 16 cell vertical launch system for the evolved Sea Sparrow missile. Aviation facilities will include hanger maintenance facilities for one CH-53E, or two CH-46s, or one MV-22, or three UH/AH-1s. The flightdeck will be capable of landing two CH-53Es, or four AH/UH-1S, or four CH-46s, or two MV-22s. Flight deck certification for the AV-8B Harrier will be for day-only visual meteorological conditions operations.21

Beyond the LPD-17, the Surface Warfare Plan 89 describes a new class of amphibious ships called the LVX. These will be designed to replace the Tarawa class (LHA-1) sometime between 2010 and 2015. These ships will evolve from the LHD-1 Wasp class and will feature vertical launch weapons systems.22

Far beyond the LVX and LPD-17 classes, conceived by the David Taylor Research Center, is the Carrier of Large Objects Carrier Dock Amphibious Ship (CLO). This ship will have a STOVL aircraft deck forward, a hanger-type superstructure above a welldeck aft, integrated electric drive, AAW capabilities, vertical launch weapons systems, but no TLAM capability.23 Currently our amphibious ships rely on escorts from the carrier battlegroups to protect them on the high seas in route to the Amphibious Objective Area (AOA) and during the amphibious assault. Additionally, these ships have no land attack, AAW, ASW, or ASUW capabilities.24

IV Can We Get There from Here?

When a crisis confronts the nation, the first question often asked by policy makers is: "what naval forces are available and how fast can they be on station?" This requires that we maintain our forces in a high state of readiness, positioned as close to the scene of action as possible.

The ability to forward deploy amphibious forces depends on the availability of sufficient numbers of amphibious ships to maintain a sustainable deployment cycle. The current numbers and types of ships are operating beyond reasonable capacity to meet demands placed on them today. Any reduction in current amphibious lift capacity will severely restrict the nation's ability to adequately respond to crisis with the preferred mix of amphibious ships.

Maintaining 12 ARGs within operational tempo and personnel tempo guidelines with declining assets may not be feasible. We had 60 amphibs in 1992 but only 38 remain today. By 2010 the number may drop to 32. CVBGs have been reduced to 11, plus a training carrier. No longer can separate and independent CVBGs and ARGs deploy

simultaneously to three theaters full time because resources are simply no longer available.25

Contributing to the decreasing likelihood of major frontal assaults is the lack of the ability to conduct rapid logistic buildup ashore with fewer amphibious ships in the force. Even in Desert Storm, the Navy would have found it difficult to sustain the 4th MEB past the normal 15 days of supplies it carries, if 4th MEB had conducted an amphibious operation in Kuwait.

In the past, officials within the government have not viewed the maintenance of a modern amphibious fleet as vital to national security. This notion began in the late 1940's when senior military officials questioned if the world would ever witness another amphibious operation as large as the World War II landings. In 1950, General Douglas MacArthur silenced these critics when he orchestrated his brilliant amphibious landing at Inchon during the Korean War, once again demonstrating the value of possessing the capability to project combat power from the sea. However, Cold War events like the Cuban Missile Crisis soon drew the attention of the Navy back to building large combatant vessels to thwart the Warsaw Pact, allowing US amphibious forces to once again slip into the subordinate position they currently maintain.

Naval planning and strategy in the recent past shaped the CVBG to project power against a single threat, the Soviet Union, at the expense of the amphibious task force and amphibious shipping. Important naval missions such as Amphibious warfare were inadequately addressed during the 1980's defense buildup and deficiencies now threaten our ability to project power. Successful amphibious warfare in the future will depend on the Navy-Marine Corps team's ability to conduct operational maneuver from the sea

(OMFTS). OMFTS applies the principles of maneuver warfare, speed, firepower, surprise, and lift, to break down enemy defenses without the traditional frontal assaults seen in the Pacific in World War II and at Inchon during the Korean War.26

OMFTS calls for a different mindset. In OMFTS, the amphibious battle commences at sea, not on the beaches. Launches can occur out as far as 100 nautical miles to ensure security and tactical surprise or they can occur closer offshore. In OMFTS, Naval forces use their speed and combat power to penetrate a number of different sites on the beach and establish a beachhead or rapidly drive inland. A recent amphibious warfare round table discussion the Navy and Marine Corps amphibious warfare leaders agreed that, "the World War II amphibious frontal assaults are a remote possibility in today's modern warfare." Instead the majority of forcible entry missions will be accomplished through "high-speed maneuver from the sea." According to Admiral LaPlante, the combination of helos, air cushioned landing craft (LCAC), and light modern infantry are the "heart of maneuver warfare and the most viable means to overcome the difficulties inherent in the littoral warfare environment."27

While OMFTS is doable with today's forces, several deficiencies in the amphibious force limit the scope of its capabilities. The Navy must act quickly to modernize its amphibious fleet. Shortly after the year 2000, several classes of amphibs will reach the end of their service life. By the 2007, 80 percent of today's amphibs will retire.

Airlift is not a substitute for, but a compliment to, our sealift capability. The same can be said for MPF and all of transportation command. They provide tremendous capability but do not replace the amphibious mission.

Limitations of airlift are not well understood by most when compared with sealift.

Airlift is considered to be faster than sealift. This is of course true when talking about a limited deployment being done. When other factors are considered, sealift may not be so slow after all. Speed, the supposed advantage of airlift, is not always the case. A deployment is not complete until the last aircraft is in place. That may take more time to complete than it would take to bring it in by sea.

The Maritime Prepositioning ships (MPF) are not considered amphibious shipping in the sense that they cannot project power ashore against an unsecured beach. However, they are significant power enhancers to the amphibious fleet.

Between 1950 and 1989, the share of funding accorded to the amphibious ships varied widely, from nothing in some years to as much as 21 percent in others. On average amphibious ships received only six percent of the budget authority in the Navy's Shipbuilding and Conversion (SCN) account. The SCN is the account through which the US Congress funds the construction of new ships. Continued efforts to reduce the budget deficit will almost certainly include pressure to reduce defense spending, which will result in increased limits on shipbuilding funds. Continued budget constraints and disputes in doctrine development and weapons procurement threaten to impede the Naval services ability to maintain a fully credible force and effective strategy to respond to growing regional threats.

In the past, certain types of Navy ships enjoyed a high priority for limited funding. Between 1981 and 1989, programs for the Trident submarines, nuclear attack submarines, and aircraft carrier escort ships (cruisers and guided missile destroyers) consumed about 60 percent of the shipbuilding budget. During the same period, amphibious vessels received only eight percent of the SCN budget.

With a diminishing defense budget the Navy and Marine Corps are now being forced to review the structure needed to meet global commitments and other possible contingencies. Eventually this rethinking will lead to some dramatic changes that require looking at force structure in different ways. To remain effective and tailored for national needs, naval forces will need to be creative and innovative as force structure shrinks. The large drawdown in personnel and reduction of amphibious shipping will likely result in smaller MAGTF's deploying more frequently, if all current commitments are to be met. Naval forces must be both capable and affordable, supported by relevant concepts, doctrine, and training. These changes will refine and implement the operational capabilities of expeditionary warfare so that Naval forces can help provide the National Command Authority with a full range of options.

V Conclusions and Recommendations

Several platform and equipment deficiencies exist which, if ignored, will limit the Naval Service's ability to execute missions in the littoral regions. In general, the Navy should shift the programming and development emphasis to ships better suited for littoral operations. Amphibious ships should have priority over any other means of transportation. They are much cheaper than aircraft in ton per mile. Transport aircraft provide a needed compliment and capability to National interest, but Amphibious shipping and their "black bottom" AFOE and MPF ships need to be kept in perspective when appropriating funds.

The Navy needs to give its amphibious fleet a boost up the priority list. We currently build amphibious ships that are practically defenseless and then spend billions of dollars building other ships to protect them and the aircraft carriers. It is time to build

amphibious ships that have the ability to fight and put Marines ashore.

Policymakers must determine whether we are sufficiently poised to execute the Amphibious Warfare Strategy today, as well as in the near and distant future. Do we have the organization, doctrine, training, and weapons to do it? If we do not, what changes can we make to fund and execute this strategy successfully in an era that will likely see significant decreases in defense budgets? A revolutionary new design concept in ship building is required so that the amphibious fleet of the future will be operationally effective against a wide spectrum of new missions including offensive operations and self-defense. If the dramatic decline in amphibious shipping is allowed to happen, it will severely limit this nation's ability to execute its stated national security strategy. Therefore, to maintain the Nations amphibious lift capability, we must prolong the service life of current amphibious ships and allocate funds to immediately begin construction of adequate replacement amphibious ships.

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